

# Building a Science and Technology Roadmap for Georgia: Chapter 1

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## Overview

The State of Georgia is well-positioned to be a national leader in science and technology. With a thriving academic research infrastructure and a growing technology sector, Georgia has a strong foundation on which to build an integrated and effective S&T community. However, Georgia's S&T community faces two significant challenges: 1) the absence of an overarching strategic plan and 2) the appearance of a fragmented science and technology constituency competing for similar resources. This paper discusses the Georgia Tech Research Institute's Office of Policy Analysis and Research (OPAR) ongoing efforts to build consensus among stakeholders in order to encourage visionary leadership for science technology and innovation in Georgia.

## Background

The mission of Georgia Tech Research Institute's Office of Policy Analysis and Research (OPAR) is to stimulate dialogue between technologists and policymakers in order to shape public policy regarding science and technology. As the organization responsible for the coordination of all the legislative hearings for the Georgia General Assembly's House Science and Technology Committee, the OPAR team is positioned to be very well-informed with regard to various S&T initiatives in the state.

Through this work, OPAR has observed that while Georgia has a fertile environment for innovation and knowledge production, the absence of a unifying statewide strategic plan has left the stakeholders fragmented in their efforts to make Georgia a national leader in science and technology activity. As such, OPAR has begun working to build consensus among local stakeholders to think strategically about the role of S&T in Georgia. In the Fall of 2008, OPAR approached policy and business leaders in Georgia including the Georgia Research Alliance, Technology Association of Georgia, Georgia Department of Economic Development, Governor's Commission for a New Georgia, Georgia Bio, Georgia Technology Authority, and Georgia Tech's Enterprise Innovation Institute. All parties agreed that more collaboration would be helpful and agreed to participate in preliminary conversations. The group has met twice, and plans to continue their discussions throughout this year.

At present, the group is getting acquainted and deciding how best to proceed. There are two noteworthy activities that are occurring with their support. First, several of these stakeholders have collaborated to secure the introduction of legislation that calls for a study committee to explore how science, innovation, technology and energy (SITE) can help Georgia become the number one state in the US for entrepreneurship. On January 28, 2009, two resolutions were introduced into the Georgia House of Representatives. HR 165<sup>1</sup> urges "four-year colleges and universities of the University System of Georgia to help make Georgia the # 1 DESTINATION FOR ENTREPRENEURS in the United States of America by developing, and expanding, education for the support of science, innovation, technology, energy, and new Georgia entrepreneurs; and for other purposes." HR 166<sup>2</sup> calls for the creation of "the Joint SITE TO GROW GEORGIA, Alternative Financing, and Entrepreneurship Study Committee; and for other purposes." HR165 passed, and HR 166 did not pass.

Second, during discussions with this stakeholder community, OPAR conceived the idea for a public policy "Grand Challenge" that would be issued to college students in the University System of Georgia. "Grand Challenges" are traditionally engineering competitions in which students design a vehicle or machine that

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<sup>1</sup> House Resolution 165, House of Representatives, Georgia General Assembly. Sponsored by Representative Bob Smith. Introduced January 28, 2009

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will accomplish a very challenging task such as traveling a long distance on a small amount of fuel, for example. In this instance, Georgia college students will be challenged to develop a strategic plan for the State that considers the role of science, technology and innovation in traditional social issues such as energy, education, and the environment. During Spring 2009, OPAR worked with a team of seniors in Georgia Tech's School of Public Policy to design the Grand Challenge as part of their Capstone course. The results of their project will be available in May 2009.

## Meetings to Date

The *stakeholder community* met twice during Fall 2008 and plans to continue their discussions during 2009. Many of the participants were actively involved in Georgia's legislative session, which began January 12, 2009, and ended in early April. As such, no additional meetings were planned until after Spring 2009.

*First meeting: November 21, 2008, 9:00 to 11:00AM. Atlanta, Georgia.* This was a preliminary introduction session in which initial ideas were put forth. After presenting some high-level goals for the group, the meeting was opened to general thoughts. The conversation was deliberately unguided in order to encourage sharing of all thoughts, concerns, ideas and questions.

Attendees put forth concerns such as:

- Idea to have a strategic plan is good, but efforts have tried before and can't get traction
- Need to show where Georgia is successful; build on success
- Stakeholder community has multiple agendas; needs one agenda. How to balance interests while maintaining each organization's identity?
- What are we good at? How do we measure it? What do we need?
- Who is missing from the table?
- Identify things that transcend all technical sectors: research parks, venture capital, entrepreneurship, facilities funds.

The outcome of this meeting was a unanimous vote to meet again.

*Second meeting: December 19, 2008, 9:00 to 11:00AM. Atlanta, Georgia.* At this session, we tried to identify some short term goals. Short term goals included presenting a unified S&T message to the State Legislature for the legislative session; developing a white paper on entrepreneurship in Georgia and working with the Georgia Tech School of Public Policy to design the Public Policy Grand Challenge.

*Third meeting: June 5, 2009, 10:00AM to 1:00PM. Atlanta, Georgia.* The agenda will include reflections on the 2009 Legislative session and general updates. Also, the results of the Public Policy Grand Challenge contest design will be presented.

Future plans include an off-site workshop to build on ongoing discussions within the community, engage additional stakeholders, and identify potential research questions. The target date and location for this workshop is November or December 2009 at Callaway Gardens in Pine Mountain, GA. The workshop will attempt to address several research questions in preparation for creating a Science and Technology Roadmap for Georgia. Questions to be discussed include:

- How would an S&T state roadmap be implemented? How do we move from discussion to action?
- What role should state-supported institutions such as the Georgia Research Alliance serve in developing the strategic roadmap? What role should private organizations or businesses serve in developing the strategic roadmap?
- How is the public engaged in this process? What channels exist for public input into science, technology and innovation policy?
- Traditional metrics include "jobs created", "companies started", and "dollars invested". What metrics can be applied to evaluate changes to quality of life as a result of the S&T Roadmap?
- How will the lives of Georgians be improved if this S&T Roadmap is realized?